

§ 143.33

(5) Notifying the complainant and the recipient (or their representatives) of their right to contact the agency for information and assistance regarding the complaint resolution process.

(c) The agency will return to the complainant any complaint outside the jurisdiction of these regulations and will state the reason(s) why it is outside the jurisdiction of these regulations.

§ 143.33 Mediation.

(a) *Referral of complaints for mediation.* The agency will refer to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service all complaints that:

(1) Fall within the jurisdiction of these regulations; and

(2) Contain all information necessary for further processing.

(b) Both the complainant and the recipient shall participate in the mediation process to the extent necessary to reach an agreement or make an informed judgment that an agreement is not possible. There must be at least one meeting with the mediator, before the agency will accept a judgment that an agreement is not possible. However, the recipient and the complainant need not meet with the mediator at the same time.

(c) If the complainant and the recipient reach an agreement, the mediator shall prepare a written statement of the agreement and have the complainant and recipient sign it. The mediator shall send a copy of the agreement to the agency. The agency shall take no further action on the complaint unless the complainant or the recipient fails to comply with the agreement.

(d) The mediator shall protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of the mediation process. No mediator shall testify in any adjudicative proceeding, produce any document, or otherwise disclose any information obtained in the course of the mediation process without prior approval of the head of the mediation agency.

(e) The agency will use the mediation process for a maximum of 60 days after receiving a complaint. Mediation ends if:

(1) Sixty days elapse from the time the agency receives the complaint; *or*

(2) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, an agreement is reached; *or*

(3) Prior to the end of that 60-day period, the mediator determines that an agreement cannot be reached.

(f) The mediator shall return unresolved complaints to the agency.

§ 143.34 Investigation.

(a) *Informal investigation.* (1) The agency will investigate complaints that are unresolved after mediation or are reopened because of a violation of a mediation agreement.

(2) As part of the initial investigation, the agency will use informal fact finding methods, including joint or separate discussions with the complainant and recipient to establish the facts, and, if possible, settle the complaint on terms that are mutually agreeable. The agency may seek the assistance of any involved State program agency.

(3) The agency will put any agreement in writing and have it signed by the parties and an authorized official of the agency.

(4) The settlement shall not affect the operation of any other enforcement efforts of the agency, including compliance reviews and other individual complaints which may involve the recipient.

(5) The settlement is not a finding of discrimination against a recipient.

(b) *Formal investigation.* If the agency cannot resolve the complaint through informal investigation, it will begin to develop formal findings through further investigation of the complaint. If the investigation indicates a violation of these regulations, the agency will attempt to obtain voluntary compliance. If the agency cannot obtain voluntary compliance, it will begin enforcement as described in § 143.36.

§ 143.35 Prohibition against intimidation or retaliation.

A recipient may not engage in acts of intimidation or retaliation against any person who:

(a) Attempts to assert a right protected by these regulations; *or*

(b) Cooperates in any mediation, investigation, hearing, or other part of the agency's investigation, conciliation, and enforcement process.